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ABSTRACT

Effective needs assessment is not an end in itself but a continuing means of meeting the needs of students and teachers. It is an integral part of other activities such as planning, operating, and evaluating school programs and teacher center activities. The key to comprehensive needs assessment is the support and cooperation of the teachers, students, parents, and administrators who will be involved in the study. This booklet describes five approaches to needs assessment: 1) pulling together existing data, 2) conducting a survey, 3) using observation and advisors, 4) conducting interviews, and 5) studying students. Appendices with sample needs assessment tools and bibliographies follow the text. (CJ)

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TEACHER CENTER PROJECT

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Teacher Centers & Needs Assessment

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Teacher Centers
and
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What This Booklet Is About

Needs are what people want but don't have

or

Needs are the discrepancy between what exists and what is desired or wanted

or

Needs are the discrepancy between what people perceive is and what they think should be

This booklet addresses needs assessment in in-service education, particularly as a device to assist teachers in developing a teacher center program. The booklet gives a brief overview of five approaches to needs assessment. The text, appendixes, and bibliography indicate sources of information for more careful study of the five approaches and others.

Approaches To Needs Assessment

Teacher needs should be ascertained accurately, realistically, in depth, and continually. The traditional approach to needs assessment has been to survey teachers, usually by means of a questionnaire. The needs of teachers, as defined in the federal Teacher Center legislation, are inextricably intertwined with the needs of students in terms of better curriculum and instructional practice. A survey of teachers usually provides some useful information, but the more sources of information you have on the needs of both students and teachers, the greater your understanding and the better your prospects of meeting those needs. It is also helpful to seek several perceptions—to ask students as well as teachers what they think they need.

There are many approaches to needs assessment. Five are discussed here. They can be used with teachers and students but also with other parties such as parents and administrators. No approach is all-encompassing, and probably none alone will tell you all you want to know, but, used creatively in the combination best suited to your specific situation, they can yield information and insights that will be of incalculable value in planning program for a teacher

center. The five approaches are:

1. pulling together existing data;
2. conducting a survey;
3. using observation and advisors;
4. conducting interviews;
5. studying students.

In the pages that follow are brief descriptions of these approaches. In the appendixes are examples of needs assessment techniques and instruments.[1]

Pulling Together Existing Data

A substantial body of unorganized data exists in most school systems that is already a type of needs assessment—records in various school and state files.[2] They can be an invaluable resource. They always represent needs of some sort, directly or indirectly. Among such data are:

- teachers' and guidance counselors' records, evaluations of students by teachers, students' cumulative files, and data on curriculum development. All these sources give insights—if not information—for needs assessment if analyzed with that purpose in mind.
- evaluation forms and reports done for regional accreditation
- Title I and Title III surveys
- staff development studies and needs assessments done by professional associations at the local, state, and national levels
- university and state department of education studies and evaluations

In general, the most valuable information for needs assessment will be that which comes closest to describing the individual student, teacher, and school. Data that characterize a large system have their uses, but they generalize and therefore usually blur the variation in needs across the system.

Conducting a Survey

Surveys are frequently seen as comprehensive approaches to determining needs, and therefore they are often used exclusively. They can serve as an im-

[1] More ideas and examples can be obtained by writing to other teacher centers (see the teacher center directory under Lance & Kreitzman in the bibliography) and exchanging information about techniques.

[2] There may be problems in getting access to some data because of legal and ethical rules protecting individual privacy and dignity. Such rules must be observed. However, arrangements can usually be made to secure information if the identity of individuals is protected.

portant tool but should be used in combination with others. There are several limitations to using surveys as the single approach:

1. Survey questions are often drawn up by people other than those who will be most directly affected by the answers (primarily teachers, students, and parents).
2. A survey is often administered as a one-time exercise whereas needs and perceptions of needs change throughout the year. For example, concerns uppermost in the minds of people surveyed in the fall may be supplanted by other concerns by the year-end holidays so that survey results will no longer be relevant though they accurately reflect views held when the survey was taken.
3. The results of surveys are usually normative; they report the most common or the most central among many points of view. Lost in the process of summarizing are the individual needs of respondents and schools.
4. Surveys usually subject respondents to the limitations of paper and pencil. They often force choices. The options they provide may not include the choices that are preferable to respondents, and respondents often have no opportunity to indicate the priority they give to a particular need or set of needs.
5. Even when a survey instrument is well designed to gauge needs and priorities, answers are too limited to give advice on how to get from assessing needs to satisfying needs.

These caveats are not condemnations of the use of surveys in needs assessment. Rather, they are cautions that, if recognized, can make surveys more useful.

Appendix 1 contains excerpts from an existing self-assessment tool. It is an illustration of an instrument for collecting data; it is also a specimen against which the above reservations about the survey method can be considered. To minimize the limitations of surveys, good design and careful selection and phrasing of content items are vital.

It is also vital to design a survey instrument with an eye to the intended uses of the data. The result will be data in readily usable form, easily broken down, for example, into data by school, grade level, or department.

Using Observation and Advisors

Observation takes many forms: teacher or student self-observation, observation of students by teachers or others, and observation of teachers by students, supervisors, or advisors. To be useful, observation should focus on both students and teachers.

Asking a teacher or student to assess his or her own needs through self-

observation, or asking teachers to ascertain students' needs through observation, has inherent limitations. A teacher or student may identify a need but be unable to see or analyze why the need exists or how it can best be met. Perceived needs may merely be symptoms of problems that are unrecognized. For example, what a teacher perceives as a discipline problem may be the students' lack of interest; a student who does not write well may not recognize whether the deficiency is in grammar or vocabulary or style.

Observation and documentation of student experience and progress in schools is still in a fairly elementary stage of development. There is much yet to be learned about how children think, why they learn, and what kinds of development (intellectual, emotional, physical, aesthetic) can reasonably be expected of them. Observation of students by the teacher can be of tremendous assistance in assessing the needs and capacities of students in a classroom; it can also help the teacher help students learn.

Observation of teachers is an integral part of advisory work, which has been popular in British teacher centers and is beginning to be used in a few American centers. To be effective the advisor must have the confidence and cooperation of the teacher. Such a condition is probably only assured when the advisor has no administrative or supervisory role and keeps observations confidential. The advisor can then, for example, draw out the teacher's views and concerns about what has been observed, mirror what has transpired or been heard, and, when appropriate, offer another perspective.

Advisory work may be done by a variety of people. For example, in the Teacher Center Project booklet *Teacher Centers and Advisory Work* (see Apelman et al. in the bibliography) the advisor is a full-time member of a teacher center staff. An advisor might also be an experienced teacher who works part-time or a consultant from another school or from a university school of education.

Videotape, used simultaneously in the front and the back of the classroom to capture the dynamics of what is occurring, is one way to provide useful documentation for self-observation and analysis and for discussion with an advisor. Another approach to getting several perceptions of classroom activity is being explored in a British experiment in which students', teachers', and advisors' observations are considered (see Elliott in the bibliography). Using a variety of observation techniques, the advisor can serve as both ally and mentor of the teacher in assessing and meeting classroom needs.

Conducting Interviews

Interviews with individual teachers or groups of teachers can provide insight and information for needs assessment (for an illustration of grassroots input, see Martin in the bibliography). However, interviewing is a skill. Thus

the results of interviewing will be no better than the skill of the interviewer. So it is important to learn how to interview and whom to interview.

The most productive interviews seek to elicit

- needs
- priorities
- discussion (aimed at clarifying and amplifying concerns that have been established)

The interviewer who feeds back what is heard so that interviewees can react, assures full and accurate communication. Written records of interviews and the interviewer's feedback provide a benchmark for future evaluations or assessments.

Interview techniques vary in approach. Appendix 2 illustrates a simple and direct approach in which written responses to basic questions are used as the basis for small-group discussions in short sessions.

Another technique is the formal one-on-one interview that probes beyond expressed needs into background and motivation and seeks additional information for designing programs to meet specific needs.

A third type of interview addresses specific issues and elicits responses informally. It casts light not only on teachers' needs but on their creativity in developing solutions to meet those needs. One example of this kind of approach appears in Appendix 3.

Still another type of interview is that which follows an informal self-assessment. A teacher may take stock of needs and then confer with an inservice coordinator, a teacher center staff person, or an advisor about ways of satisfying those needs. See Appendix 4.

Studying Students[3]

The needs of teachers are inevitably connected with the needs of students. If students have needs that are being short-circuited or not met, their problems will be reflected in the needs of teachers. Conversely, if teachers recognize and respond to the needs of students, they will find some of their own needs and concerns diminished. The interrelationship of needs underlies the purposes of the federal Teacher Center legislation, which states that centers are to improve curriculum and instruction to better meet the needs of students. The Teacher Center regulations explicitly permit time for the study of students so that it can be a continual and integral in-service activity.

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[3]This section was adapted from "Studying the Learner," in Roy A. Edelfelt et al., *Teacher Designed Reform in Teacher Education* (Washington, D.C.: National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1972), pp. 19-27.

Recent observations and studies give rise to the assumption that children and adolescents are not what they used to be and probably not what adults think they are. Such persons as anthropologist Margaret Mead and psychologist Douglas Heath have written books giving evidence of changes in children and youth. Mead makes the point clearly in *Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap:*

> Today, nowhere in the world are there elders who know what the children know, no matter how remote and simple the societies are in which the children live. In the past there were always some elders who knew more than any children in terms of their experience of having grown up within a cultural system . . . There are no elders who know what those who have been reared within the last twenty years know about the world into which they were born . . . There are now no elders who know more than the young themselves about what the young are experiencing. (pp. 77-78, 82)

To determine the specific needs of students you need to know how to study them. There are many options. The best strategy is to remain flexible in choosing techniques and instruments for studying students, pursuing those that are promising and fulfilling, and discarding those that do not yield information of value. The greater the range and comprehensiveness of study, the greater the likelihood that the results will make a substantial contribution to discovering needs.

Studying students will definitely give you greater insight into how students —and parents—see the world. But it has its pitfalls. First, collection, processing, and analysis of data are time consuming and require thought. Second, the data do not usually specify what to do; needs must be inferred from them, and the inferences must be tested.

A useful introductory exercise on student study is to write a description of your most intriguing student in the current school year and share the description in a small group of teachers. Then write how you think the student would describe you. Writing about your most intriguing student makes you begin to be deliberate about observation and description of children and youth. As a result you may reconsider how you deal with students. Imagining your student's view of you may bring the realization that the student does not see you or the school as you expected. That realization may bring a second one, which is basic to studying students: Students (and teachers) are perceived differently by different people, depending on status, situation, activity, etc.

The exercise leads easily into an examination of current literature on the nature of students, ways of studying students, the needs of society, the nature

of change, and models for change.[4] Teachers can share their findings, discuss ideas and approaches, and identify helpful books, articles, and films.

Following are more brief illustrations of ways to study students. They may be used by individual teachers, groups of teachers working with the same students, or whole building faculties working to improve school program based on the needs of students.

Sentence completion. Give students the first part of a sentence and ask them to complete it in writing or on tape. Sample sentences to be completed by elementary school students: School is the most fun when . . . . My favorite time at home is . . . . Some things I would like to use at school are . . . . I like people who . . . . More sophisticated questions can be raised with more mature students. The value of this technique (and others like it—see below) is that it gives evidence of the different ways that different students react to or perceive the same issue or question. If several teachers within a school use the technique, their students' replies can be categorized by such variables as sex, age, and grade, and compared.

Open-ended questions. Use open-ended questions as topics for drawing, writing, taping, class discussion, or small-group discussion. Sample questions: If you were a teacher, what would you do? What do you like best about school? What kind of discipline should your school have?

Pictures taken by students. Have students take snapshots of such subjects as a favorite spot at school, a pet, a favorite person, or perhaps just "something favorite." Discuss each student's snapshots with him or her, or have the student write or tape some remarks about the snapshots.

Taped data. Put a cassette tape recorder in the classroom, and teach students how to operate it. Then tell students that anytime they have an idea or question or comment that they want to communicate to you, they can record it if they wish. After a reasonable time period (e.g., three weeks), organize the data into a form that will make them useful in planning.

Survey of students' life outside school. Develop a questionnaire on students' life outside school—activities at home and in the neighborhood, interests and hobbies, skills and talents, favorite movies and television programs, favorite types of entertainment, etc. Sample questions: How many brothers and sisters do you have, and how old are they? What do you usually do after school? How do you earn money? How often do you go to the movies? Have you ever been to a zoo?

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[4] Those assessing needs of secondary school students (and teachers) will find it helpful to examine five recent studies of secondary education (see *American Youth,* Brown et al., Coleman et al., Martin et al., and Weinstock in the bibliography). They provide a view of adolescence and schooling in American society and a number of recommendations, some of which have relevance to teacher center activities.

Student-teacher conferences or interviews. Arrange individual conferences or interviews with students to get at such matters as academic performance (e.g., what students think their best and worst subjects are, and why), out-of-school activities, sociability (e.g., how well they think they get along with other students), attitudes toward school (e.g., what they like best and least about their school and their grade), interests, and feelings about particular events (e.g., how they feel about not being put on a particular committee). The conferences or interviews can be formally scheduled, with students getting questions in advance, or they can be conducted informally and spontaneously, as an opportunity arises. The latter kind might occur following an instance of disruptive or antisocial behavior or simply at a moment when the teacher is alone (relatively) with the student. Whether formal or informal, planned or spontaneous, however, conferences and interviews should not be aimless. Teachers should plan the subjects that they want to discuss with each student. Training in interviewing skills would be helpful.

Correspondence with other students. Have interested students correspond with a student in another school in the same district or city. Or have them correspond with a student in another state (perhaps identified through the teacher center network) or another country (identified through such organizations as International Friendship League and Sister Cities International[5]). To be useful for student study, the technique requires that the teacher see the student's letters—a requirement that the student should understand before initiating correspondence.

Class meetings and discussions. Hold class meetings and discussions to get many students' views on a single topic (e.g., What Makes Me Angry) or to let students air their pleasures and complaints about school life.

Parent questionnaires or interviews. Survey or interview parents on their own and their children's attitudes toward school. Topics might include parents' expectations and ambitions for their children, students' and parents' roles in decision making, the school's role in students' personal and social development, treatment of students who do not complete their grade, relative emphasis to be placed on various curriculum areas, homework, appropriate behavior in school, and discipline. The questionnaire might be adapted for use with students or with teachers, and the data from each source might be compared.

[5] For $3 the International Friendship League will provide a child aged six years or more with the name and address of two possible correspondents abroad. The League's address is 22 Batterymarch Street, Boston, MA 02109. Approximately 650 U.S. cities participate in Sister Cities International. Some have linkages with the schools in their sister city abroad. To find out if your city has a sister city abroad, call city hall or write to Sister Cities International, Education Programs Section, 1625 I Street, N.W., Suite 424-26, Washington, D.C. 20006.

Observation. Observe students at work and at play, in school and at home. Observation can be formal, such as when students' participation in class discussion is charted, or it can be informal, such as when an incident of actual or potential significance is noted on a card or in a log. It can focus on individuals (e.g., Duane today, Diane tomorrow) or situations (e.g., what students do during free periods). Observation is most useful when done with a purpose—to answer a question about a student or a teaching strategy, for example, or to test a hypothesis.

Shadowing. Much can be learned about keen observation by shadowing someone else's student first; choosing a student in another school eliminates any threat to the host teacher and assures more objective observations. Observe the student's behavior for an extended period—anywhere from an hour to a day. Record behavior for a stretch of time or at specified intervals—for example, for a 15-minute period during an hour's observation or every 10 minutes during a half-day's or day's observation. Following the intensive observation, interview the student, and, if possible, accompany the student home to learn about his or her home environment. (For a lengthier description of shadowing, see Lounsbury & Marani in the bibliography.)

Case studies. Study a student intensively in a variety of ways—observations, interviews (with the student and others), cumulative records, etc.—and write a description of the student and his or her life as you see it.

Sociometry—the study and measurement of relationships within a group. Use sociometric questions to gain a better understanding of the patterns of interaction among class members. For example, with whom do students prefer to play? to work? to share? To whom do they look for leadership? Answers should be interpreted cautiously, for they may not represent reality or indicate the depth of a student's feeling. Assistance in interpreting answers—and in writing questions—can usually be obtained from a school psychologist or guidance counselor.

Teacher meetings. Meet regularly with groups of teachers from your school to discuss student behaviors that call attention to needs. Such a technique not only yields information about individual students but also helps teachers get a more accurate perception of their skill in recognizing students' needs.

Advisors. Invite an advisor into the classroom and observe the advisor's techniques of discovering students' needs—for example, conversing with individuals and groups, asking questions, listening, taping, engaging students in fantasy play or dramatics, helping students draw or paint expressively, etc.

General Comments

The approach you take to assessing needs should be adapted to your unique situation. Several factors will influence your choice of approach, among them:

- the resources available to you
- the time you have to accomplish the job
- the cooperation you can expect from teachers, students, parents, and administrators
- the uses to which you will put the information that you collect
- your resources for implementing the conclusions of the study

The key to comprehensive needs assessment is the support and cooperation of the teachers, students, parents, and administrators who will be involved in the study. To justify drawing on that support and cooperation you should have a commitment to making changes in response to the needs that surface, as well as a realistic appreciation of the resources available to make those changes. Effective needs assessment is not an end in itself but a continuing means of meeting the needs of students and teachers alike.

Needs assessment is also not an isolated activity. In the best circumstances it is a continual operation and an integral part of other activities such as planning, operating, and evaluating school program and teacher center activity. Needs assessment as a separate and comprehensive study may occasionally be of value. However, the results are usually overwhelming; too many needs are identified to be able to do something about very many of them.

Appendix 1

Teacher Self-Assessment Inventory (Excerpts)[1]

Name_____

Grade Level_____ Subject Area_____

School_____

Please respond to each item.

	Interest			*Experience*
	High	*Minimal*	*Would Like More Information Before Deciding*	*Skilled and Can Share*
I. Interpersonal Communication 1. Learning strategies for communicating to the community				
4. Developing strategies to successfully involve classroom assistants				
II. Developing Pupil Self 8. Facilitating pupil self-concept and worth				
III. Individualizing Instruction 13. Creating and developing materials and learning options				
IV. Assessment 16. Coping with the task of evaluating and communicating student progress				
19. Constructing and using tests for evaluating academic progress				
21. Diagnosing basic learning difficulties				

[1] Items were selected from the Teacher Self-Assessment Inventory developed by the Mt. Diablo District Staff Development Committee, which had representation from the District, the Mt. Diablo Education Association, and the University of California at Berkeley. The complete inventory may be obtained from the Mt. Diablo Education Association, 2180 North California Boulevard, Walnut Creek, California 94596.

	Interest			*Experience*
	High	*Minimal*	*Would Like More Information Before Deciding*	*Skilled and Can Share*
V. Discipline 24. Using methods of classroom discipline at appropriate times				
VI. Organization for Instruction 34. Utilizing staff resources (e.g., team teaching, aides, flexible scheduling)				
35. Deciding on appropriate pupil-grouping procedures for instruction within the classroom				
39. Deciding which teaching technique is best suited for a specific purpose				
VII. Future Trends and Issues In Education				
45. Keeping abreast of developments in your own subject-matter area				
48. Alternative education programs				

Data Summary Sheet

List the numbers of your five highest interests in order of priority. Indicate your preferred method of inservice education for each, using the following codes: W—workshop; G—informal group; C—college/university course; P—individual project; V—visitation; O—other.

Priority	*Interest Number*	*Implementation Code*
First		
Second		
Third		
Fourth		
Fifth		

Appendix 2

Case Study Exercise[1]

Teacher Interest Grid

Purpose: The purpose of the Teacher Interest Crid is to help teachers focus on their personal wants, interests and needs. It is an exercise designed to stimulate thought, generate ideas, and initiate discussions about teacher inservice education.

General Procedure: The Teacher Interest Grid is divided into three (3) parts. These may take as much as thirty minutes each and should be completed during one meeting.

It is important to limit the size of the group doing the Teacher Interest Grid to fifteen people or fewer. The members of the group should be comfortable with one another and with the leader.

Directions for Part A: The group leader gives a Teacher Interest Grid to each member of the group. Each person lists five (5) things under each category in Part A. To encourage people to list items, the leader can offer suggestions. Overlapping may occur, and should not be discouraged.

Directions for Part B: When Part A has been completed, group members should fold out Part B. They should then place check marks in columns that indicate methods and resources that would enable them to meet their needs. The leader should give the group an example.

Directions for Part C: Along the left-hand margin of the grid, each teacher should star (*) the five (5) most important needs on their list. They should rank these needs in order of importance (1-5, with 1 identifying the most important).

At this point group sharing and discussion should be encouraged.

Each person should then list his five (5) most important needs on the attached Needs Profile Sheet. Under each need, people should list three (3) *specific* ways in which they might meet their needs. It is extremely important that the five (5) items be stated so that everyone has a common understanding of their meaning. Also, when listing the ways that an individual need can be best met, *be specific!* A glance back to Part B of the Teacher Interest Grid will remind teachers of the variety of ways needs can be met and indicate the types of inservice programs that are available.

The Teacher Needs Profile Sheet should be collected and analyzed by the leader. Some schools will have an inservice coordinator to analyze the data and plan accordingly. When such a person is not available, we recommend that an inservice committee or an interested teacher be given that responsibility.

Warning: Failure to implement an inservice program or support service after the identification of needs is more dangerous than doing nothing to begin with. *Do not create expectations unless you can follow through with support.*

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[1] From Jillian S. Otten (Ed.), *Resource Guide for Inservice Teacher Education* (Waterbury, Vt.: Washington West School District, 1977), pp. 33-37.

Teacher Interest Grid

Part C	Part A	Part B: Work Experience	College/ University Courses	With More Money	With More Time/Help	With Access to Resource/ Library Material	Minicourses/ Workshops/ Institutes	Traveling/ Field Trips	Working with Administration	Working with Other Teachers	Working with Outside Consultants	Done Best Alone	Research & Professional Writing	Professional Association Work	Community Work
	Additions you would like to make to your classroom														
	1.														
	2.														
	3.														
	4.														
	5.														
	Things which would increase your job satisfaction														
	1.														
	2.														
	3.														
	4.														
	5.														
	Things which would make you a better teacher														
	1.														
	2.														
	3.														
	4.														
	5.														

Teacher Needs Profile Sheet

Directions: On the Profile Sheets which follow, write your five (5) most important professional needs. Under each, list three (3) *specific* ways in which that need might be met. State each need clearly, so that everyone in your group will know what you mean. Be *specific* about ways in which your needs can be met. A glance back to Part B of the Teacher Interest Grid will remind you of the many ways needs can be met and of the various types of inservice programs that are available.

Example 1: I need to learn how to work better with students who have reading disabilities.

a. Graduate course work in reading disabilities
b. Observation of other teachers and other schools—e.g., reading specialist in Warren Elementary School
c. More teaching materials—e.g., SRA Kits, Benefic Reading Series

Example 2: Improve classroom management and discipline.

a. Read *Maintaining Sanity in the Classroom*
b. Workshops—recordkeeping, classroom discussion techniques
c. Materials—*DUSO Kit* from American Guidance Service, Inc.

1. _____
   a. _____
   b. _____
   c. _____
2. _____
   a. _____
   b. _____
   c. _____
3. _____
   a. _____
   b. _____
   c. _____
4. _____
   a. _____
   b. _____
   c. _____
5. _____
   a. _____
   b. _____
   c. _____

Appendix 3

Ken's Whimsey Exercise[1]

Purpose: This exercise is designed to be used with teachers to establish an atmosphere in which to begin thinking about teacher interests. It is meant to be non-threatening and whimsical in order to relax participants and set a foundation for further discussion.

Procedure: The whimsey exercise can be used in various ways. Because it is a conditioning exercise, not a procedure to elicit specific data, we recommend this format.

It is important to limit the size of the group participating to no more than twenty (20) people. Group members should be comfortable with one another and with the leader.

The leader gives a copy of the six (6) whimsey statements to members of the group and asks them to write their responses. The leader should emphasize the whimsical nature of the exercise, encouraging the group to let their imaginations range.

When everyone has finished writing, smaller groups of about five should form. Each group can share individual responses in a supportive discussion.

After about thirty minutes of small-group discussion, the larger group should reconvene to share significant observations or comments and come to closure with the exercise. The entire exercise should take about an hour.

Whimsey Statements

1. *Facilities/Materials:* An anonymous donor recently died and left a million dollars to your school. The principal is asking all teachers for their suggestions for professional development activities and new materials they would like to improve instruction and curriculum. The chance of a lifetime—spend, spend, spend! What changes would you like to make? What will you want for your teaching?

2. *Workshop:* The school board has finally agreed to provide release time and funding for a self-initiated, self-directed minicourse/workshop of your choice. The content and methods are left totally up to you: classroom cardboard carpentry, scuba diving, Russian literature . . .? What kind of minicourse/workshop will you design?

3. *Classroom Atmosphere:* This has probably been the worst week in your teaching career. The kids were fighting and bickering with each other as well as with you. Everything you tried to improve the classroom atmosphere failed. Your sympathetic principal has generously offered to take your class until you

[1] From Jillian S. Otten *(Ed.), Resource Guide for Inservice Teacher Education* (Waterbury, Vt.: Washington West School District, 1977), pp. 31-32.

fully recover. However, he wants to know what he can do and what you want to do to make the classroom situation better when you return. How would you like to see the classroom atmosphere changed? And how do you think that can be accomplished?

4. *Innovation:* The State Department of Education is offering grants for innovative school projects throughout the state. As the money and support begin to flow, your principal urges you to submit your "brainstorm" that you've been planning for the past year: a foxfire project? an urban/rural school exchange? Describe your pet project.

5. *Communication:* A new principal has just been hired. He is very concerned with opening and maintaining communication channels in the school as well as throughout the district. He is already asking teachers what tney need in terms of time, support, and effective feedback. What will you suggest?

6. *Visitations:* The school board has been convinced that happy teachers are better teachers. Therefore, they are allocating funds for cultural growth activities. Some teachers are planning to visit local historical sites; others are planning to study alternative educational programs in various parts of the country. One teacher is even going on an archeological dig in the Southwest. What are you going to do?

Appendix 4

Professional Improvement Objectives [1]

Less formal needs assessment can be done by individual teachers considering areas to improve in order to be more effective teachers. The following is a process of defining and addressing individual teacher needs and wants.

Procedure: Each teacher is asked to consider his strengths and weaknesses as a classroom teacher and to establish one or more professional improvement objectives to work on during a school year. (The following sheet is used for this purpose.)

Once the improvement objective is established, the inservice coordinator and the teacher should confer to determine the best methods and resources to assist the teacher in meeting the objectives. For example, if five teachers address the same area or need for improvement, they can be grouped accordingly for a workshop, etc.

The inservice coordinator and teacher agree upon a time line and the responsibilities of each party. They then set a time for another conference at which they will discuss progress in reaching the professional improvement objective. Once the objective is met, the inservice coordinator writes a letter for the teacher's personnel file indicating the completion of the objective and the nature of work the teacher did.

Professional Improvement Objectives

1. State specifically what you would most like to learn to improve your teaching.

2. By what date would you like to learn this?

3. Through what methods do you feel you could best learn this (e.g., one-to-one contact, workshop, course, etc.)?

4. What time commitment do you feel is necessary to learn this?

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[1] From Jillian S. Otten *(Ed.), Resource Guide for Inservice Teacher Education* (Waterbury, Vt.: Washington West School District, 1977).

5. What time commitment can you make to this?

6. What resources, if any, do you need to learn this?

Conference Date _____

Teacher's Signature _____

Inservice Coordinator's Signature _____

Date Scheduled for Progress Check _____

Date Objective Completed _____

Report by Inservice Coordinator _____

_____

_____

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